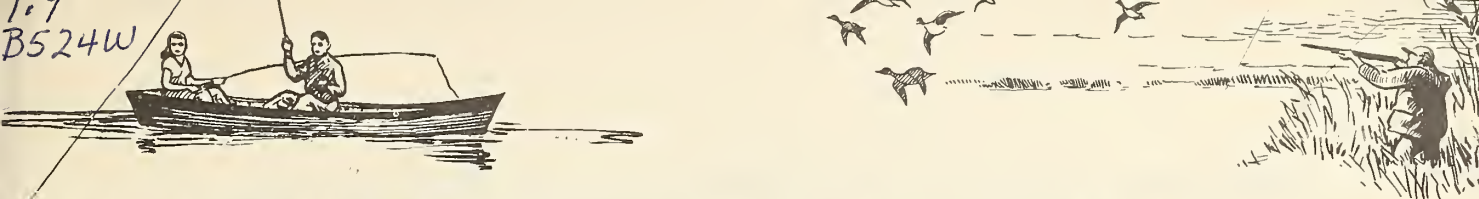


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RECREATIONAL POLICY ON NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

LANDS AND WATERS administered by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife offer opportunities of national significance for outdoor recreation. The purposes of these fish and wildlife conservation areas vary, as do their physical adaptability and accessibility. The Bureau has primary jurisdiction over most of these areas, administers some of these areas jointly with another agency, and on some areas has secondary jurisdiction.

All areas of the National Wildlife Refuge System, the National Fish Hatchery System, and the fish and wildlife research stations are dedicated to the welfare and enhancement of fish and wildlife values. Only those recreational uses are permitted which are compatible with, and will not prevent the accomplishment of, the primary objectives of each area. Recreation facilities are developed and maintained and lands and waters are used for public recreation, consistent with the Bureau's objectives, funds, and other resources, and in accordance with approved plans for specific types of recreational use of designated sites at specified times.

A. When is Recreation Authorized. Appropriate public recreation is authorized as an incidental or secondary use of national wildlife refuges, game and wildlife ranges, national fish hatcheries, and fish and wildlife research stations. These uses may be authorized where there is a significant local or national recreational need which can be met without conflict or interference with primary objectives for the areas and without detriment to the facilities; where the safety and welfare of the using public can be satisfactorily assured; and where there will be no duplication of adequate recreational facilities on national, State, or local forests and parks within a reasonable distance.

B. Uses Directly Associated with Fish and Wildlife. The greatest contribution of fish and wildlife special purpose areas is to foster those recreational pursuits associated directly with fish and wildlife in its habitat. To achieve this objective, consideration is first given to those appropriate public recreational uses which are directly associated with public enjoyment by the observation, utilization, interpretation, and understanding of fish and wildlife populations, habitats, and conservation values.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE



Recreational uses of this type include:

Sightseeing. Priority is given to the development of recreational facilities and services which facilitate and encourage the enjoyment by viewing, study, and interpretation of fish and wildlife in their habitat.

Nature Observation and Photography. This recreational use is encouraged when no significant adverse effects will result. The number of persons using an area is controlled or restricted during periods when fish and wildlife would be disturbed or when such use conflicts with project operations.

Interpretive Centers and Exhibits. The Bureau's national goals and objectives for fish and wildlife conservation can be effectively furthered through visitor centers, aquariums, fish rearing ponds, display pools, big game exhibit pastures, and wildlife displays appropriate to the unit at which situated.

Fishing. Sport fishing is permitted on authorized areas and waters to the extent that it does not conflict with fish and wildlife management objectives. Fishing is subject to Federal regulations and aboriginal rights. Fishermen shall comply with applicable provisions of State law and regulations and any further restrictions of Federal law or regulation.

Hunting. Programs for hunting on areas within the National Wildlife Refuge System depend on the provisions of law or Executive order applicable to the area, and upon a determination by the Secretary that the opening of the area to hunting is compatible with principles of sound wildlife management and is otherwise in the public interest.

Hunting on Bureau areas is subject to Federal and State regulations and aboriginal rights and may be further restricted by special regulations.

C. Uses Indirectly Associated with Fish and Wildlife. Those public recreational uses which are associated with fish or wildlife habitat, but which are not primarily directed toward an appreciation of fish and wildlife, are given consideration. Where these uses support recreational programs directly associated with fish or wildlife, they are encouraged. Where there is other public demand, the requirement will be met at a minimal level, as the need is demonstrated.

Recreational uses of this type are:

Picnicking. This recreational use is encouraged at designated sites where it can be supervised and maintained with no significant damage to facilities or habitat, or disturbance to wildlife.

Swimming. Swimming may be permitted at designated beaches or sites, on areas that have suitable waters, in accordance with Federal, State, or local laws, regulations or ordinances at such times as no significant disturbance will result to fish or wildlife or to recreational pursuits directly associated with fish and wildlife. Recreational scuba or skin diving may be permitted only on carefully selected sites and under stringent safety regulations.

Boating. The use of boats is permitted where it materially contributes to public enjoyment, utilization, and appreciation of fish and wildlife through programs of nature observation, fishing, and hunting. Pleasure boating not directly associated with fish and wildlife values is given secondary consideration. Boating is restricted to specified water areas or zones and is subject to those restrictions and control measures deemed necessary to avoid conflict with fish and wildlife management objectives or to safeguard the lives of boating and non-boating visitors. The use of boats on all areas is subject to Federal, State, and local laws or regulations.

Water Skiing. This activity is not desirable on Bureau fish and wildlife areas. It may be permitted on large, deep-water areas subject to rigid control in designated zones during periods of low waterfowl use if no significant or unusual safety hazards or disturbance to fishermen or swimmers result.

Camping. Because of inherent conflicts with wildlife needs, camping is restricted on most Bureau lands. Camping may be permitted on game or wildlife ranges, on areas where camping was authorized either prior to refuge's establishment or by an establishing order, and on other large areas where primitive overnight camping may be required to permit the satisfactory harvest or enjoyment of fish and wildlife.

Field Trials for Dogs. This activity may be permitted under the sponsorship of a responsible organization, in accordance with the terms of a permit issued for this purpose, provided that no conflict with wildlife management programs and no damage to Bureau property or facilities is assured.

Authorized persons may be allowed to use firearms with dog trials, only when no interference with or undue disturbance to wildlife species on the area will occur.

Ancillary Recreational Uses. Such recreational pursuits as ice skating and cross-country skiing may be permitted. Golf, baseball, target shooting, etc., are foreign to the concept of conservation areas and are discouraged.

Persons may not search for semi-precious rocks or mineral specimens, except under permit.

The search for and removal of arrowheads and other artifacts or objects of antiquity is prohibited by law and regulation on Bureau lands, except under the provisions of permits issued by the Office of the Secretary under 43 CFR, Part 3. Where such attractions exist on Bureau areas, it is the policy to further scientific knowledge or educational interest by encouraging reputable scientific or academic organizations in their study, under the appropriate authority of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior.

D. Services and Incidental Facilities. Authorized recreational sites must provide safe and sanitary conditions to the using public. Toilets and trash receptacles commensurate with the size and use capacity of the area and, wherever practical, a safe and adequate water supply must be made available. The operation of recreational facilities by concessioners may be authorized by contract where recreational use plans justify a demonstrated need for large-scale recreational activities.

Facilities and services directly supporting interpretation, or fishing and hunting activity, are provided and managed by the Bureau, wherever possible. State conservation agencies and non-profit conservation organizations may be authorized to provide and manage these facilities and services under appropriate arrangements.

Maps, leaflets, regulations, or interpretive natural resource conservation or historic materials are made available to users of recreation sites.

E. Fees and Charges. Permits may be issued and reasonable fees charged for public use of areas of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the National Fish Hatchery System.

The Bureau encourages private capital or local sponsoring groups to provide and maintain recreational services (except interpretive, and fishing and hunting services), whenever it is feasible. Normally, this is done by contract, and allows for the charging of fees commensurate with the costs of furnishing the special services and facilities, providing a fair profit to the concessioner and an equitable return to the Government.

F. Visitor Control and Protection. Project leaders will exercise their delegated authorities pursuant to 50 CFR to protect fish and wildlife and their habitat and prevent their disturbance; to protect Bureau property and facilities; and to assure the safety of the using public. The control of recreational uses is accomplished through laws, regulations, posted directions, and the enforcement thereof.

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